

i keep thinking that perhaps  
i should put the seatbelt  
around it.

## CHINESE TAKE-OUT

i yelled to her to bring some chinese food back with her  
when she was going out the door, but i didn't know  
whether she heard me or not. it wasn't until around  
midnight that she came in, and when she did she had  
a large bag in her arms and from it i could smell  
the aroma escaping of our favorite dishes. so i  
got her a beer glass and on the coffee table i put  
sticks and napkins and paper plates. i cannot  
tell you how many times we have had these dishes;  
really, there's no sense in me even trying to  
venture a guess. in the basket on the mantelpiece  
are enough slips from fortune cookies to choke  
a cat. often when i am going out the door  
she'll yell to me to pick up chinese. that's  
all she has to say. and when i get to the  
restaurant smiles meet me there. they know  
exactly what i'm there for. i'm not even asked  
or handed a menu. the girl at the cash register  
will fill out the order without me having to  
say a word. it's to the point where  
to change dishes we'd have to change restaurants.  
at our usual place a change in our order  
would not be believed. it'd be tantamount to  
breaking an oath. and it is with this  
knowledge we live, and so we know it'd be  
a catastrophe to tire of the dishes we are  
associated with. true, there have been  
nights when we have looked at one another,  
at the sameness of the dishes in front  
of us, at the same faceless shrimp and  
the same cubes of tofu diced with such  
meticulousness, at the same bold forests  
of broccoli and the same strands of  
surrendered cabbage — we have looked at  
these and ourselves and we have honestly  
questioned how long we can persist  
in this madness. i know when we pass  
the new mexican restaurant, down by  
the old post office, we are tempted  
with what take-out might be like there.  
but, even though our oath is  
an unspoken one, still we  
chose to live by it,  
and in this way  
the years pass.